

As Time Goes By

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As Time Goes By

by [CigaretteInk](#)

Summary

Semi-sequel to Love Poultrice No. 9. Dahlia Lavellan is almost settled into her new life as a clinic healer in Arlathan when she receives a letter from her mother, requesting she take some time to return home. Dahlia decides to return home for a short visit, but Fen'Harel is eager to follow and introduce himself as her lover, Solas. Meet the family and get a laugh or two while your here.

Letters from home

My Dear Dahlia,

It has been so long since I've heard from you last. You can only imagine the shock on my face when you last sent word you were now living in Arlathan. The last time I had visited the city it was nothing more than a marketplace, but that was so many years ago. Your brother tends to visit there frequently to sell our wine so perhaps he will stop by your new clinic if he has a moment away. I'll tell him to try and not embarrass you, but you know how Reed can be sometimes.

My flowers have grown very well this year, all the buds are in full bloom, even the hydrangeas survived the frost. All the pollen has made your father sick to his bones, but he still loves to tell me how happy he is that my flowers brought in more bees than the last year. Even Aster is thinking about building an apiary so we can make honey wine in the spring.

I wish you would come to visit us every now and then, you haven't seen the twins since they were a year old, but I understand you can be very busy. But surely since you are not the only healer in a small town anymore that you could spare a few days? Your father misses you so much that every time he gets sick or hurts himself he always calls for you.

"Send out for my girl! Those healers in town are butchers, all of them!"

You know how dramatic he can be.

You must write back and tell me about everything in Arlathan. I must know how you are doing, I worry sometimes.

Love,

Mom

Mom,

Remind Dad that an emergency consists of life, limb, or eyesight, please don't let him send me any more messages about him dying on his bed because his daughter doesn't love him enough to visit. We all know that's not true and if I get another emergency missive at my clinic about him being on his deathbed from his "broken heart" I'll be sure to remove that goofy bone of his. Wherever it may be.

The new clinic I assist is more advanced than anything I could have imagined, and their garden has herbs to cure diseases I had never even heard of before. The other healers here are more experienced than I, but they are enjoyable to be around for the most part. The clinic mostly helps those who are too poor to afford even basic care from the more 'distinguished' clinics through alms Fen'Harel's temple collects.

But enough about that.

Tell Dad that I will consider visiting for a few days soon enough. Perhaps I can break away from here after the festivals are over. And there's no need to tell Reed to come visit me, he already has if he didn't tell you. The other healers laughed themselves sick when they saw me try and smother him with a bed pillow. He woke up on the floor where I left him.

You need to tell him that if he ever comes to my clinic pretending to be our drunk father again, I will kill him in front of guards and witnesses. I will set him of fire and trap his spirit to a privy seat. No fooling. Now his life is at stake!

I love you all and I'll see you soon enough.

Dahlia

Chapter 2

“Vhenan...” A muffled groan escaped the mass of blankets on the large bed.

“Vhenan, what are you doing?” Solas rolled onto his back and quickly draped his arm over his eyes in an effort to block the light from penetrating his lids.

Dahlia continued to look through her armoire, digging through her clothes and pulling out a few items before returning to the rucksack on her chair. With little concern for silence, she went about her business of packing her bag while simultaneously dressing her self.

“I’m packing.”

“Why?” his voice was rough and low; mind still in the process of repelling sleep.

“I’m leaving you.”

“I will never love again.” The sarcasm from his tired voice made her giggle as she tightened the leather straps on her pack. “But I am leaving you.”

She didn’t need to turn around to know that the loud shuffling of the bed sheets meant he was now completely coherent.

“What? Where are you going?” he almost stumbled over his blankets as he attempted to pull a sheet from the mess on the bed to drape around himself; an unnecessary attempt at modesty.

“I’ll just be gone for a few days. I’ll come right back.”

“But *where* are you going?”

Amused by his frazzled display, she smiled as she continued to make laps around their room, making sure she remembered everything she would need while he followed behind her, white sheets trailing behind him.

“My mother wants me to take a small trip away and come see my father, visit my brothers, that sort of thing.”

“Isn’t that quite a ways from here?”

“Not really. It’s no further from here than my old home; just a half days ride on horseback.”

Clutching the sheet around his waist, he relaxed his shoulders in relief. “That’s good, but why didn’t you tell me before?”

“Because you would want to tag along.”

“But I am tagging along.”

Giving a soft hum, she turned her head and continued her work. “No you’re not.”

“Oh really?”

She groaned at the intended challenge, “Why do you even want to go?”

“I simply want to put faces to the people who raised you, that’s all.”

“No, I think you want to embarrass me in front of my family.” She sat down on the edge of the bed, adjusting her stockings as he stood patiently before her.

He couldn’t help but chuckle at her accusation, “I won’t deny that, but it is out of genuine curiosity. Besides, are you not concerned about all the trouble I can get into when left alone to my own devices?”

“Not until now I didn’t. I am not your leash, you know!” She stood up and playfully pushed him aside, smiling as she made her way to her vanity. She pulled a drawer and fished out a decorative white comb and began working out her tangles and he hurried to dress himself. “Some people may disagree with you on that!”

“What the hell sort of trouble did you get into before me?” she whispered to herself as she stared at her reflection, unamused. She watched him dress from her mirror as she painted her lips and eyes; by the time she had finished he was standing behind her, dressed with a small rucksack, waiting for her to finish.

“You’re not going with me.” She shook her head and smiled.

As he grabbed her bag and made his way to the eluvian, he laughed to himself, “I’ll get the horses ready!”

“Dammit! I said go home!” The sharp noise of the horse’s hooves hitting the stones on the trail was deafened only by the wind howling passed their ears. Solas managed to keep his horse close to Dahlia’s, but he knew from personal experience that Naug’sesus was an impressive courser and had the endurance to keep this pace for a long while.

“You can’t lose me that easily! Fazai was bred for speed!” He had to shout to her as they raced. “You may be faster, but Naug’sesus is nothing more than muscle and stamina! Your mare can’t keep up with me for much longer!”

“You know I can find you easily! Even if you outrun me and I slow to a walk I can track you!” He could hear the exertion in his horse’s breathing as she tried to keep up with Naug’sesus; he knew it wouldn’t be too much longer before she would refuse to run.

They ran another minute before Dahlia gently pulled back on the reins. Naug’sesus threw his head back in agitation at the sudden stop, but Solas was happy to see that they were now moving comfortably at a much slower pace.

“Fine, but you will behave yourself. Don’t start rubbing up against me when we get there. And don’t provoke my brothers!”

“I shall be as chaste as a choirboy; when your family is looking.” She played around with several scenarios in her head of all the things that could go wrong with this visit, voicing a new rule as they walked along, much to Solas’ chagrin. “You act like I’m some unwashed barbarian!”

“You haven’t bathed in four days! You’re an animal!”

“And you bathe too much!”

“I am constantly covered in the blood and sick of people! I’m a healer, dammit! You want me to crawl into bed after some poor sod puked on my feet, you tell me! I can accommodate!”

As the sun began to paint the sky violet as they approached her old home he was actually very impressed with the valley. The air smelled sweet of flowers and fruit as they walked the horses down the road lined with iron fencing and morning glories. The rows of grape vines were neatly spaced and trimmed that Solas was having a hard time turning his attention away from the fields as he watched each row pass by. "A vineyard? This all belongs to your family?"

"Most of it, yeah. The orchards over there are not ours though." She motioned to a small grove of apple trees in the distance. "Neighboring family. They're not very big, but they produce the apple cider to a few of the neighboring towns in autumn. They are family friends. I use to play with their daughter when I was a young girl."

"So you grew up with all this? I always thought you were raised in a home much like the one you were living in."

"I did for the most part. This is all relatively new. I think they came into all this about ten years ago? It was before the twins, I'm sure." Her voice trailed off as she thought about it, only to be brought back to the sight of the iron archway into the front yard.

They dismounted their horses and led them to the front. Solas admired the smell and sight of the flowers, carefully displayed throughout the gardens. A small white pergola could be seen practically glowing in the dusk light as little fireflies danced around the blossoms.

Unpacking their rucksacks from the saddles, they walked up the steps to the front door and gently rapped the knocker. As they stood patiently for an answer Dahlia looked at him, frowning at the mess in his hair. "You're a mess. How did you get all that stuff in your hair?"

"I don't know, love. It could have happened when you ran me through the thicket." He smiled and silently laughed at her, "Do you know what you look like, though?" Dahlia's eyes grew wide as she tried to run her fingers through her hair, only to get them caught in tangles of leaves and twigs. Her eyes narrowed as his grin grew wider, "You knew. You let me walk up here looking like this, you knew!"

There was no time to correct this before the door flew open and the figure of a tall, chestnut-haired man came out without warning and lifted Dahlia up in a tremendous hug. Solas turned away, biting his lip as he tried to stifle his laugh.

"My girl! My sweet little girl! Come in my darling! We were just sitting down for tea!" Without letting her down, the man carried her inside, leaving the door wide open. Solas grabbed their bags and walked inside, closing the door behind him.

Taking a moment to use the mirror next to the doorway, Solas picked the leaves from his hair and straightened his clothes before following them into the adjacent room.

"Dahlia, look at you!" the soft and delicate voice of another woman could be heard as she gently laughed, "You look as though you took the back roads!" Walking through the door Solas was slightly confused for a moment when he saw a woman who looked exactly like Dahlia, playing with her hair and picking the twigs from the tangles. "My poor darling girl, were you chased?" The man with the brown hair just laughed, "I bet she just went through the thicket. Let her rest a moment before you start doting."

Solas stood in silence, waiting for a moment to properly introduce himself, or his presence. The sounds of children stomping and laughing filled the halls as two young boys bound around the corner and began jumping around Dahlia like two excitable puppies. Solas couldn't help but laugh

at this, when all eyes were instantly turned towards him in confusion.

The sweat running down the back of his neck never felt so noticeable until now. Dahlia wanted to let him squirm there for another moment, but decided against it, “This is Solas. He insisted that he join me here for the next few days. You can put him in the barn if you like.”

“Dahlia!” her doppelganger exclaimed, “He will do no such thing! And it is a pleasure to have him accompany you. We don’t have many visitors, so I’ll have Dahlia make up the guestroom for you Solas.” As she walked over to grab their bags, he gave her a sly wink before walking up to whom he assumed was her mother. “I’m Vi’dal. The two little men here are Roan and Flint, and this goofy man here is my husband, Llowar.”

Solas bowed and proclaimed his appreciation as he began to see the subtle differences between Dahlia and her mother. While the two were almost identical, their manners were the absolute opposite. While there were some obvious signs of age around her eyes, she was the most agreeable woman he can ever remember meeting. Her father was also a very emotional man who never seemed to stop smiling. He was also a very fit man, clearly from working the fields around their home; Solas could see him as being very intimidating if it weren’t for the overly friendly character he put on display. “Have a seat lad! We just put the water with the leaves and it should be ready soon!”

Solas smiled as he sat down on one of the wooden chairs in the corner, but inside he groaned at the thought of having to drink the bitter water.

Dahlia came back out from the hall looking cleaner than before. Sitting down next to Solas she set out the cups and poured tea for each of them while the boys ran outside to play with the fireflies.

Vi’dal cheerfully took her cup and sipped her tea as she stared at Solas. It was hard to place, but he could have sworn he saw a brief sharpness in her gaze. Was she glaring at him, or was she studying him? He couldn’t figure out which, but the smile never faded from her lips.

Llowar paid them no mind as he fawned over his daughter.

Solas took a sip of tea, trying to keep his displeasure off his face as he quietly listened to everyone chat.

“It’s wonderful to have you here my girl! Aster and Reed will be in shortly. I sent them into town for several things, but perhaps they visited the pub for a drink before coming in.”

“Your brothers?” Solas’ inquiry was quiet in respect to interrupting her father.

“Yes. Reed is my elder brother and Aster is our younger.” She said between sips of her tea.

“So Solas! What is your relationship with my girl? Friends? Where you one of her patients?” his voice snapped him to attention as he tried to find a suitable answer.

“I was a patient of hers actually.” He started, “Almost a year ago, now that I think about it.” He took another sip of the offending drink.

“Oh! Good friends then? My girl can heal just about anything I would think!”

Dahlia called after her dad; asking him to tone down his enthusiasm was a request made on deaf ears. “It’s a little more...complicated?” She was having a hard time trying to find the words without having to openly proclaim he was her ‘Vhenan.’

“Oh, is that right?” Vi’dal joined in.

Dahlia started to squirm in her seat. She could practically sense the next question to come from her mother's lips. She may have been able to leave it at that if it was just her father, but her mother was a very sharp woman. She could be dangerous if she was capable of possessing an evil thought in her mind.

"It's probably not that complicated, my dear. What do you call him?" her smile was genuine, but Dahlia knew better than to believe that it was innocent.

"Solas?" was her answer; hoping it would be enough to pacify her.

"No, my dear. What do you *call* him?" she took a sip of her tea, waiting patiently for her answer.

Dahlia felt a knot of embarrassment in her throat. Suddenly, it felt like all eyes in the world were now fixed on her. She looked down at her rapidly cooling tea and took a small sip before setting the cup on the saucer in her lap. She quietly cleared her throat before giving Solas a shy glance, hoping her pitiful look would be enough to have him spring into action. But he just sat there, darting his eyes between her and her mother.

This woman was a shark and he wouldn't dare change the subject.

Finding no sanctuary from him, Dahlia straightened her back, set her shoulders and gave her mother a confident look that spoke of no fear.

"He is my...vhenan."

Chapter 3

“Oh my. Is that why you have all those twigs and leaves in your hair, my dear?” Vi’dal laughed, trying to cover her mouth with the back of her hand. Her mother’s crass joke was not lost on Solas as he practically snorted his tea out his nose in an effort to save face.

“No! I ran him through the thicket because he was following me! I didn’t even tell him I was coming here until this morning!” Dahlia was practically talking through gritted teeth as her face turned bright red.

“Just ignore her, son. My girl just has a hard time showing her affection in front of other people.” Now it was her father’s turn to dig into her ego. “When she was a little girl she would get so upset she would crawl into my lap, just seething with anger and demand I hold her until she fell asleep.”

Vi’dal chuckled, “She is such a daddy’s girl.”

“Yes, go ahead and share all my embarrassing stories! I’m going into the kitchen!” Her voiced was a little louder than she intended, but the sound of laughter as she stormed off made her believe she may not have been loud enough.

As their laughter died down they heard the front door open and the cheerful voice of a young man echo down the hall. “Dahlia!”

“Get in the drawing room and say hello to my vhenan! Because everybody in this damn house has to know how awkward I am about admitting this sort of thing!” Dahlia was practically shouting with rage.

The vibrations of the kitchen door slamming made the paintings on the wall jump. A moment later a young man who couldn’t be more than twenty appeared, wide-eyed and a little panicked. His eyes darted around the room until they finally settled on Solas; lips curled awkwardly as he tried to keep his smile hidden behind a straight face.

“Hello, Dahlia’s...vhenan.” he gave a small wave as his attention began to focus away from Solas towards his mother.

“Uh... Reed is taking the packages into the kitchen. Should I help?” He seemed a little frightened.

“No, dear. Dahlia is in a mood. I’ll spare you the wrath if you would help set the table.”

He gave a sigh of relief as he left towards the dining room.

“That was Aster, correct?”

Vi’dal took the last sip of her tea before placing her cup and saucer on the table, “He looks like his father, doesn’t he? Well...a lot like his father when he was young man anyway.”

Solas just nodded and put his half empty cup on the table beside him, “Perhaps I should help her calm down. I can’t help but feel I’m partially responsible for her anger right now.”

“Oh no, she’s always been like this when she visits. We give her grief, but she bounces back. We just think it’s funny she tried to hide you from us for almost a year now.”

“Yes, my girl must really adore you if she kept you a secret. She would never want to give us the

ammunition to laugh at her for showing genuine affection towards a man.” Llowar sat back in his chair and relaxed as he set his cup to the side.

Ignoring the sounds from the kitchen, they continued their conversation while they patiently waited for dinner.

“Hey Dahlia, quick question: what the fuck is Fen’Harel doing on our couch?” Reed tried to spy inconspicuously through the crack in the door, but the reflection in the mirror on the wall couldn’t provide a good enough angle to view the man. Dahlia continued to stir the pots, using the motions to induce a meditative state.

“Last I checked he was drinking tea on it. So long as he’s not destroying it, I couldn’t care less.”

“You know what I mean. Why is he here?” Keeping his voice down, he continued to watch his parents’ converse with the trickster God in their drawing room.

“Because he wants to be. Just shut up and peel the potatoes.” Placing the lids on the pots, Dahlia began rummaging through the pantry for her other ingredients.

“Does mom and dad know? They’re just talking.”

Dahlia clutched her cleaver and sent in straight through a cabbage head, “How’s Rytthe?” The loud chop brought Reed out from his concentration. “Don’t change the subject Dahlia, there’s a Pantheon God in our house.”

“I’m not changing the subject, I’m genuinely curious. How is Rytthe?” her intent didn’t match the disinterest in her voice and he picked up on it quick, but for the sake of moving past this he replied, “He’s fine. Now can we talk about something else?”

“Like what?” she continued to cut the vegetables with calm malice.

“The man in our drawing room Dahlia! Having tea with our parents! Let’s talk about that!” He tried to keep his voice low, but his patience was wearing thin with her dodging his questions.

“Why don’t you go in there and ask him yourself?”

“Is he angry at someone? Is he pissed off about what I did in his clinic?”

Dahlia rolled her eyes when she thought back to the embarrassment, “No, he thought that was hilarious.”

“Is he here because of dad? Or us? Have we been drafted?”

“To fight what war, Reed?” Her patience was running thin with all these questions. As she finished the prep work on their meal she began to think of what to make for dessert.

“Whatever war it is it must be bad if they’re thinking of pulling dad out of retirement.”

Taking a mixing bowl she pulled him away from the door and forced the bowl and spoon into his hands, “Shut up Reed. Mix. And if you tell mom or dad that he is Fen’Harel I will kick your teeth in.”

Once dinner was finished, they each sat outside in the pagoda, watching the boys play hide and

seek in the dark. The summer nights were often very warm in the valley and Dahlia enjoyed sitting outside, drinking the raspberry wine as they watched the fireflies slowly retreat for the night.

When the flickering lights were completely gone, the two young boys ran inside, but not before saying goodnight to the new ‘lady’ and the new ‘man.’ Solas chuckled at the fact her youngest brothers couldn’t quite grasp the concept of their older sister visiting, but Dahlia found it unsettling how long she had been away from her family.

Dahlia and Aster followed their brothers inside, leaving Solas and Reed to smoke in relative peace.

Reed was uncomfortable being left alone with the God, but Solas insisted. Noticing how unnerved the man was in his presence led Solas to believe he knew him more as the elvhen God Fen’Harel rather than some stranger.

They sat in silence, blowing pillows of smoke and watching them rise up into the blackened sky before dissipating. Reed couldn’t begin to fathom why the Dread Wolf was eating dinner and chatting simply among his family, but the curiosity was figuratively killing him.

“May I ask you a question?”

Solas took in a shallow breath, not taking his eyes away from the moon above, “Of course. You don’t need to be so formal around me, I’m nothing you need to be afraid of.”

“Oh. I was just curious as to why you are here with us this evening.”

“I’ll be here until Dahlia leaves.” He said through the smoke in his mouth, “I hope that’s not an issue. I just wanted to see the Lavellan clan for myself.”

“There must be another reason why you are here. I can’t imagine we are so special to warrant a visit by you.”

“Oh, well. The reason I’m here personally?” Reed nodded, holding the pipe to his lips, hoping his response wouldn’t seem rude.

“Well, that’s easy enough to answer. It’s because I’m sleeping with your sister.” Reed just looked at him, or perhaps looked through him as his brain took in the words repeatedly.

“Please excuse me for a brief moment. I need to confer with my sister...about something else.”

Solas chuckled, “I’ll bet.”

Reed stood up quickly, walking slow at first, but by the time he reached the porch steps he practically ran into the house. “Dahlia!” He yelled.

“Damn it Reed! Don’t wake up the house, I’m right here!” Following her voice let him into the study where he found her reading on the floor in front of the fireplace.

“You’re diddling the Dread Wolf?” He tried to keep his voice down, but his question came out in force.

“Big deal. You’ve been diddling Rythe for several years now.”

He closed the door behind him to give them some privacy, “Everybody already knows about that! But no one in this house knows you’re sleeping with a God! Dahlia!”

“He’s not a God,” she sighed in exasperation, “he’s just a very powerful mage and a pain in my ass

some days.”

Closing her book, she stood up and returned it to its former home on the shelf. “Just be nice. That’s all I ask right now Reed. Just be nice and act dumb.”

Reed felt jittery. Eyes wide and ready to flee, “I’m telling dad.”

“You better not tell dad!” Reed attempted to make a grab for the door.

Conjuring a ball of ice Dahlia threw it to the floor, landing just underneath him. One step onto the slick surface and Reed’s feet slid out from underneath him, landing him flat on his back on the cold, hard floor. “You couldn’t do that before...” he groaned.

Standing above him, he could feel the magic crackle in the air, making the little hairs on his neck stand. “So help me, Reed. So help me if dad or mom or anyone else in this house finds out I will do something ugly to you. Something so ugly I can’t even conceive of it yet.”

Reed lifted his head from the floor and looked Dahlia in the eye, “There is nothing you can do now that will be equal to what mom is going to do when she finds out you iced the floor.”

Chapter 4

Once everyone retired to their rooms Solas remained awake, lying quietly alone in his bed. He stared up at the intricate designs in the ceiling, listening to the chirps from the crickets outside his window while he thought back on the day. Dahlia went to bed in her old room, leaving him bored and lonely.

He thought back to the little boys playing, smiling at the thought of them more occupied in their own company than the rest of the household. Aster was a quiet and evidently shy young man who seemed to mostly preoccupy himself with drawing plans in a little book he kept in his pocket. Solas witnessed him pull out his journal and a small charcoal pencil and begin sketching something underneath the dinning table several times throughout the meal. He was a little quirky, but Solas found him very interesting; a quiet genius taking no breaks from his work. He imagined the young man waking up in the night to write down his inspirations, plucked from the fade before resuming his slumber.

Finding little comfort in his bed, he sat up and walked to his window trying to gauge the time by the placement of the moon. With the night just beginning, he removed his shirt and sat on the corner of his bed, letting his body cool while he pondered what to do next.

Dahlia snuck quietly through the house on the tips of her toes, listening at each door she passed for the faint sounds of sleep from within. She kept a small glowing crystal to light her way down the hall, gripping it tightly to her chest to block the light at each door she stopped at before continuing. Stopping by her parent's bedroom door she could hear her father snoring without pause. She remained until she was certain her mother was asleep as well before letting the light escape her fist once more.

'His room is just another door down,' but before she could take a step forward she saw four tiny glowing eyes at the end of the hall. Putting a little more magic into her crystal to brighten the hallway she saw the twins, Flint and Roan, white hair glowing by the soft blue light.

"What are you doing?" asked Flint, or was it Roan? She couldn't tell them apart yet.

"I forgot something in the guest room, but what are you two doing up so late?" she whispered as quietly as possible, realizing she was directly outside her parent's door.

"We're on patrol." The other child was the first speak.

"Lady, you should be in bed too. Mom and dad don't like it when people sneak around at night."

"I am your sister!" she whispered in force, "Why is that so hard for you two to understand? By Mythal, I look like our mother! Exactly like her!"

The two just stood there in silence, staring holes through her head; their once playful manner made creepy by the dark room and placid expressions. "Go to bed you two."

"If you take another step, we'll scream for dad."

'You little monsters! You're just like your brothers!' Thinking back to all the times Aster would blackmail Reed and her made her realize how insignificant all those old problems were at that very moment.

She heard her father's snoring stop for a moment before resuming once more; she let out a silent sigh before staring down at the tiny elves blocking her path.

"What do I have to do to pass?"

Their smiles spread to big, toothy grins as they each grabbed her hands and led her down the hall.

"...and there he lay, with the scarf she gave him, wrapped tenderly around his neck. The end."

"Then what happens?" came a voice from underneath the blanket from the bed on her right. "I don't know, that's just how the story ends." She closed the book with a muffled clap.

"Then make something up." Came the voice from the bed on her left. "He's dead. There is really nowhere else to take this story!"

"Read us another one!"

"Yeah, we're not tired yet!"

"And you're not going to be tired if I keep reading scary stories to you! Why do you even have this book?" She flipped the cover open to find the name 'Reed' scrawled poorly on the first page, clearly this book belonged to him when they were both children.

"Mom says reading is good for the imagination."

"I'm a little concerned about the sort of imagination inspired by books like this. You know your brother Reed isn't quite right, right? He use to dig up worms and put them in my socks." She shuttered at the thought of remembering those creepy crawlies squirming between her toes.

"Reed says he likes men more than women because you use to beat him up when you were little."

'That bastard. I'm going to go beat him up right now!' she smiled at the thought of giving him one swift punch in the face as he slept.

She straightened her face before replying, "That's not true, your brother is just an asshole. Go to bed."

"But we're not sleepy yet." The child on the left tried to argue.

"We'll tell dad!" Came a muffled threat from underneath the blanket on her right.

"Tell dad what? That I read scary stories to you and went to bed? I should tell dad that you were up prowling about in the hallway." The children looked at each other, having a silent conversation before the right spoke once more.

"We'll tell dad you were going into the guest room, with the man!"

"I needed something from his room!" she almost forgot how well the sound could echo in their bedroom.

"Oh yeah? Like what, huh? What were you trying to get, huh?" the smarmy tone in the child's voice grated on Dahlia's nerves more than anything else she could imagine.

'My ring flicked, you incorrigible little...'

“I needed to get my comb from his bag.”

The two boys just looked puzzled. “What? Did you think all this order on my head just magically happens?”

“Yes.” Both brothers answered at the same time.

“If I knew a spell to tame this hair I would be the wealthiest hairdresser in Arlathan. I’m going to bed.” She stood up and quietly walked to the door.

“Goodnight lady!” she heard in unison before quietly closing the door behind her, resisting the urge to turn around and tell them once more that she is their sister, but she felt they actually knew and were just attempting to aggravate her.

Pulling the crystal from her robe she lit the way back to her bedroom, walking less quiet than before until she stopped before a door across the way from hers. Waiting patiently until she heard the sounds of slumber inside, she opened the door quietly and walked up to the bed where the sleeping man lie. In the dark she could see the man’s dark brown braid coming undone on the pillow underneath him. His arm draped over his eyes and his mouth lay open in silent rest. He looked positively peaceful.

Dahlia gripped the pillow from underneath his head, jerked it out and pressed it to his face before slapping his bare chest as hard as she could; his muffled cursing pleasing to her ears.

Reed flung the pillow from his face and sat up abruptly, trying to make sense of the sudden assault.

“Dahlia! What the fuck!”

“Stop telling people I’m the reason you’re gay! I don’t go around telling people you’re the reason I can’t butcher a fucking chicken, do I?”

Gently touching the growing welt on his chest he groaned at the fresh sting, “You know this is war, right?”

“It was war the moment I was born. I will massacre you.” She didn’t care at this point how loud they were. Turning around she walked to the door, leaving Reed to contemplate his revenge.

Reed, feeling the excitement rush from his body as he fell back into his bed, “Mom said I’m her favorite!” he called after her.

“She did not! Stop your lying!” Wanting to slam the door behind her but not wake up the house, she closed the door and walked across the hall to her room.

The first thing she noticed was her lantern gently glowing beside her bed, certain she had extinguished it before leaving. The soft noise of drawers being pulled from the dresser behind her door had startled her at first. Peeking behind she found Solas, shirtless and rummaging through her old possessions. Pulling out curious little baubles and examining them in the light before replacing them, she closed the door behind her, sliding the lock into place behind her back.

“You must tell me the story of why you won’t butcher a chicken sometime. It sounds like a good one.” He pushed the drawer back into place before pulling out the one below.

“How long have you been waiting for me?” She was so quiet he almost couldn’t hear her.

“Not that long I believe. I heard you reading next door and thought I should wait for you here.” He

pulled out a small, leather satchel and emptied the contents into his hand. He grinned as he pulled the device apart to reveal a pair of very old spectacles.

“Very curious.” Craning his hand to better see the device from all angles he noticed the metal on the frame to be of dwarven craft, most definitely from Orzammar. “How did you get these?”

“Orzammar is the only place we could go to get the vats and pipes we needed to make the wine. My dad would take Reed and me with him when we were children.”

He walked towards her and placed the spectacles on her face, smiling at her new appearance behind the silver frames, “You look...like a very angry librarian.”

Dahlia’s vision blurred trying to look through the old lenses covered in years of dust and scratches. “Put them back, I don’t need them now.” She took them off and handed them over to Solas who still marveled at the dwarven ingenuity. “You said you went to Orzammar to retrieve vats and pipes?”

“They’re out in the building beside the stable. Would you like to see them?”

After replacing the satchel and spectacles back to the drawer he walked over to her bed, sitting quietly on the side of the small mattress. “I would very much like to see what dwarven inventiveness can do for wine making, so long as we don’t get in anyone’s way.”

Turning around towards the door, she unlatched the lock and pulled it open slowly so the hinges wouldn’t squeak.

“We won’t if we go right now.”

The moon was large and bright, lighting their way along the rows of vines until they came to the large building alongside the stables. The massive sliding doors fortunately had a smaller, more easily accessible door built into one of the panels.

Dahlia went to grab the lock, realizing the lock wasn’t there and the door was open, “Is it normally left unlocked?” Solas inquired.

“No, we always lock it.” Pushing the door open they could see the lights glowing brightly on the support beams. “Who’s here?” Dahlia called out to the apparently empty room. The machinery in place was very impressive to see. Large open vats stood at least twelve feet high on one side of the building while the other held a carriage and carts.

A loud bang came from the first vat before the amplified voice of a young man called out from within, “Dahlia? Thank the Creators!”

“Aster?” Dahlia was feeling quite done dealing with her brothers all night.

Readjusting and tightening the sash on her robe she climbed the ladder to the top of the vat and peered over the edge to see her brother, bracing himself inside the bottom funnel of the tank, “Aster, what the hell?”

“Can you please help me? Please?” He sounded tired from trying to keep from sliding down into the lower piping.

“Alright, hold on a moment.” Climbing back down the ladder she pointed to the rope attached to a pulley system over the drum, “Lower that would you?”

Solas untied the knot from the hook and lowered down what looked like a child's swing directly into the vat. Feeling the tug and sudden weight adjustment, Solas threaded the rope through the hook on the beam and pulled. Once Aster reached the lip of the basin Dahlia reached out to grab him, pulling him towards her and helping the tired young man escape.

As soon as Aster's feet touched the stone floor, he collapsed in a heap of exhaustion.

"Thank you. I would have been in there till morning if you hadn't heard me calling." His legs were shaking from fatigue.

Dahlia and Solas looked at each other for a moment, realizing there happening upon her brother was pure luck. "Yeah! You're lucky we heard you! But what were you doing in there?"

Aster tried to stand, running his hand through his short, bristly hair flung sweat in all directions. "I just needed to get some measurements."

Dahlia shook her head, "Get inside and go to bed. That could have waited until morning, what's the matter with you?"

"Yeah, yeah..." he began walking towards the door, head hung low in embarrassment.

"We'll clean up here and turn out the lamps." With a small thanks he quietly left, shutting the door behind him.

Solas felt as though he should follow the young man home to make sure he didn't collapse, but Dahlia was already making her way towards the back of the building to a set of stairs leading down below.

"Did you hear him calling?" Solas followed her down to what he could only guess was the cellar.

"No. We are so far from the house you wouldn't hear anything until you were right at the doors." Grabbing a small crystal lantern she lit the wick inside and walked towards the back, pass the rows of barrels and bottles to an old oak wood table placed along the back wall.

Solas looked around at the barrels of wine placed in sturdy wooden wracks, making note of the various dates branded on the side. The smell of wet and swelling wood was strong, but so was the pungent smell of fermented grapes and bitter wine. "I thought we were here to look at the vats."

"You saw them. Not too much to them really since they're empty at the moment. I really just wanted us to have some privacy."

Solas could feel his ears perk up slightly, like a dog hearing the word, 'treat.'

"That's much better than my idea."

Chapter 5 NSFW

Chapter Notes

This is a really smutty chapter with a lot of dirty talk. LOTS of dirty talk...

Opening the lantern she pinched the tiny flame, extinguishing the light until there was nothing but darkness around them. Aside from the faint glow illuminating the stairwell from the room above, the room was absolutely black.

“You know... your parents are aware of what we get into. We could have had this little affair inside your bedroom.” Through the darkness he could feel her hands playfully untucking his shirt before sliding up his chest, enjoying the feeling of lean muscles underneath her palms.

“You could hear me reading from the other room. I don’t want any sideways glances at breakfast because of a squeaky bed. Also, Aster would have been trapped until morning so it’s a good thing we did come all the way out here.” He grabbed her by the waist and pulled her towards him, relying solely on his sense of hearing and spatial awareness to navigate in the darkness. “Wouldn’t this be a bit more exciting with a light?”

“No. You don’t need to see what I’m doing to appreciate it.” Sliding one hand down to his belt, she pulled at the strings of his breeches. He closed his eyes to help him focus on the gentle tug around his groin before grinding into her hips. “Appreciate is such a mediocre word right now.” Listening for her breathe he managed to find her lips in the darkness, overwhelming her as he continued pulling her hips against his growing arousal.

Pulling away from his lips she drew her mouth to the hard knot on his throat, sucking the flesh and feeling the rumble of his groan on her tongue. Keeping his eyes closed he began sliding his hand up from her waist to her breast, cupping it gently as he pinched the tip through the thin fabric of her robe, humming in approval as though he were trying to judge a piece of fruit. Drawing away from his throat, she attempted to let her eyes adjust to see his face, but the darkness of the cellar would only allow a faint silhouette of his body to be seen. “How does such a weird man get to be in your position?” she whispered. “I take notes. Like how I know there’s this little spot right between your neck and ear that...” Moving his hand away from her breast he lightly touched his finger to the aforementioned spot, eliciting a squeak from her as she tried to wiggle away from his grasp.

“No, ass! You know what I mean!” Hugging her to his chest, he swung her over to the table next to them and pinned her hips against the edge. “I do, but that is a long and boring story. I would much rather focus on this chapter where we have merciless, seemingly never-ending sex in the wine cellar of your parent’s home.” He pulled at the sash of her robe as he dipped his lips to the newly exposed flesh on her neck.

“Merciless?”

“The kind of where your hips hurt for a few days and I try to explain away the tiny little bites on my neck.”

“So...like at the Spring Gala?”

“Aside from the fact that we are both sober and I don’t have to search through rose bushes to find

your smallclothes? Just like that.” Her quiet laugh made him grin as he continued to spread her robe apart. While the room initially felt cooler than upstairs, the humidity in the air made their bodies sweat as their temperature rose. Dahlia could feel the moisture accumulate on her scalp, wetting strands of hair to her face as she became more and more frustrated with trying to undo the front of his breeches. He chuckled at her growing hindrance, “I tied two knots, just to see you get worked up.”

She gave him a playful smack on the chest as he laughed at her frustration. “You can’t even see me, you dirty dog.”

“No, but I can feel you impatiently tugging on my clothes.” While he couldn’t necessarily see her, he swore he could feel the heat from her anger steadily climb, which just made him laugh more at their blindness. His laughter came to a sudden halt as she began rubbing his cock through the taut leather of his pants.

“I’d like to see you get worked up too.” Her voice may have been a little sultrier than she liked, but he didn’t seem to be paying much attention to words at that moment. “You can’t even see me...” his voice trailed off as he leaned forward to press his forehead against hers, feeling her breath on his lips. “No, but I can feel you getting harder in my hands.” He smiled, though she couldn’t see it, as he began crushing her hand between their hips, grinding slowly.

Hooking his hands underneath her backside he lifted her up onto the table, overwhelming her lips in an impatient kiss. Spreading her legs he continued to rub against her, enjoying the sound of her hastening breaths escaping between their lips.

Shrugging off her robe left her skin feeling free and sensitive against the shear fabric of her evening gown. Holding his head between her hands she gave him one last kiss before returning her hands to his swelling groin, stroking the outline of his cock underneath the thin leather. The unforgiving material was becoming more than uncomfortable as he reached down to try and undo his breeches himself. Letting out a frustrated growl, he pulled away from her and took a few steps back, “Give me a moment to...” he heard her let out a sly chuckle, “...get yourself worked up?”

The momentary freedom she had allowed her a chance to remove her gown, letting the straps fall from her shoulders and shimmy it down to her feet where she quickly tossed it towards her lover, hitting him in the back as he desperately tried to let the light from the stairwell assist him in undoing the knots. “Please tell me that was your robe?”

“Nope, I am positively naked.” Silently gloating behind him, she spread her legs as before, rubbing her clit in anticipation.

Solas gave a silent prayer, begging the spirits to untie his strings before he ripped them open. “Come on...” another moment and he felt the success of unfolding one of the infernal knots and made quick work of the last, pulling the cords to loosen the binding and allowing him a second to breathe. Letting his head fall back and giving a loud sigh, “I will never do that again.”

Turning back around, he found her easily; sitting on the table as before, honest to her word and absolutely bare. Pulling her closer to the edge of the table, he resumed his motions as his hands rubbed the sticky sweat from her hips to her breasts. Feeling very hot in his baggy shirt he wanted to disrobe as well, but decided against it. He could feel her hands make quick work of pulling the strings away before exploring inside the beltline to find the head of his twitching cock. Pulling his breeches down enough to free his member completely, she ran the pad of her thumb up the underside of the head, finding a small escape of his seed trickling down.

Feeling all her inhibitions fail, she brought his cock to her cunt, letting him glide against her

wetness as he thrust hard against her clit, grinding her tiny ring up and down. He moved back a step, taking his cock in his hand while slowly stroking its length. She groaned at the sudden cease, reaching out to him to try and pull him back. His breathes came out in loud hauls as he stepped forward and began pressing the tip of his head against her ring before pushing her body down onto the table, leaving her on her back and spread before him in the blinding darkness. Resting his hand on her belly he continued his teasing, "Did I mention to you about what I found in the Academy library the other day?"

Feeling a little distracted with the steady stimulation, she placed her hand on his as he kneaded the soft flesh of her stomach, "No. What did you find?"

"I was scanning several books in a quieter wing when I saw something small wedged between two thick tomes..." bringing the head of his cock down her slit and back.

"What was it?" Her question came out like a breath, wanting to rock her hips but his hand kept her firmly planted on the table. "Ever hear of an 'Arlathan Scripture'? They are normally very graphic, sexual pictures or stories meant to be placed inside a book to give the illusion of study." Sliding his hand up her torso, between her breasts up to the back of her neck, he bent down to give her a small kiss below her navel, "People just sit in the library and look at those things? Like they're pretending to read?" Her interest was peaked at this information. It was vulgar and almost perverted, yet brilliant.

"This one was very good though; very well drawn." He began placing small kisses leading down from her belly towards her mound before taking her ring between his teeth. With a small tug he let the ring fall back, not hearing a word but feeling her legs shudder, attempting to close as he hooked his hands underneath her knees. A lungful of air caught in her chest as he repeated the action, holding her hostage as he doted upon her cunt with flicks of his tongue, "The only thing I didn't like is how unrealistic it was..."

"Unrealistic?" The word came out sharp as he immediately resumed, arching her back off the table. "Very unrealistic. You are not nearly that subservient as they depicted." He grinned as he could feel her whole body stiffen in shock.

"What?" She almost came off the table, but he caught her, crushing his lips against hers. Forcing her mouth open he battled her tongue for dominance of her own body. Pulling away from his lips she gasped for air as he immediately buried his face into her neck, biting her gently as he placed the head of his cock at her entrance. "Arlathan Scriptures are sexual illustrations normally depicting prominent figures of Arlathan. It would seem you are no longer just a healer in my service. Makes you wonder if it was coincidence."

She could feel him grinning against her skin, but the thought of being depicted in such a way was almost terrifying. "What did you do with it?" she felt almost breathless as he began pushing slowly inside, giving a small thrust before being completely sheathed inside her. "I kept it of course." He whispered to her ear before gently pushing her back onto the table.

Lifting her legs up and hooking his arms underneath her knees he grabbed her wrists and pulled her towards the edge of the table as he gave her a powerful thrust. She almost cried out as he began pulling her towards him as he continued thrusting, sweat dripping from his body and showering over her.

She was climbing faster than she would have liked to admit; imagining him over her in the dark, but it was impossible to see his expression. Quickening breaths, dry moans gradually rising, he heard her whimper, "Light the lamp."

He almost didn't hear her before stopping immediately, believing he may have hurt her. Releasing her wrist, he conjured a small flame to assist him in finding the lamp. Lighting the wick, he closed the casement and looked down upon her. She lay underneath him, covered in a glossy layer of sweat, grinning up at him with a tired smile. Confusion was easily noted across his face at the sudden need for light. His eyes moved across her body, noting how he was still buried deep inside her. He felt a desperate need to buck his hips against her, fuck her until she begged him to come.

"What was I doing? In the little book, I mean..." He couldn't help giving her a quick thrust as he answered her while trying to catch his breath. "Well..." he pulled out of her, gritting his teeth as he released her other wrist and rolled her over onto her stomach. "...to start, you were bent over my throne, but this will do." Pulling his shirt over his head he tossed it aside as he reached down to pull the sash from her robe. Coming up behind her he placed the thin strip of fabric on the table and grabbed his cock, twitching and wet, and entered her from behind.

Seeing her glistening naked body in the warm light of the lamp almost made him forget what he planned to do with her. "I need your arms." Before she could offer them he grabbed her hands and began tying the sash around her wrists behind her back. Her mouth fell open and she let out a loud moan, "...What else?" Her mouth was dry as she tried to swallow to help lubricate her throat, but as he withdrew himself from her she whined in protest. "My beautiful woman, I will stretch your quim as you beg. I will fuck you until I can no longer hold myself back. I will come inside you again and again until my seed finds purchase inside you. Will you allow me this?"

His voice was filled with rough passion, ragged and coarse as he whispered this behind her ear before burying his face into the sweat soaked hair at the nape of her neck. Breathing with her chest compressed against the table was uncomfortable, but this feeling was easily shadowed by the sensation of blood, pulse to her clit and he remained hard and deep inside her cunt.

"Vhenan, please..." was enough for him.

Gently grabbing her bound wrists, he pulled back before rushing back into her again. The pace was steady but hard as Dahlia begged him to continue, punctuating each of her words with the rapid drive of his cock. Letting her wrists go, he put his hands on the joint of her hip and used his arms to guide her back as he continued thrusting into her sopping cunt.

"Is it embarrassing to realize your family knows I fuck you? They don't even know how many times I've made you come, in public no less." His words pierced through her down to her clit as her moans became faster and harder to get out. "The way you ride me, fill you with my seed before you leave to go assist in my temple." Reaching a hand underneath her to finger her clit, "Or better yet, how you enjoy taking me in your mouth while I'm seated at my dais, swallowing every drop you can take from me." Her body shook and bucked against him as her cunt clenched around his cock in a tight grip, releasing and tighten again as it attempted to milk him while she called to him, "Ah! Solas! I-I can't..."

"Don't worry my Vhenan; I'll make sure you are fucked hard and proper before we walk back." His thrusts were hitting her hard and fast as he powered through her climax, through her fluttering walls around him, until he felt that familiar pull from his groin as he gave several erratic bucks before coming in her tight cunt. "Dahlia...take me..." he collapsed to his knees, dragging her with him off the table as she sat in his lap, panting and moaning, feeling the pulsing and twitching of his cock inside her as he filled her to the brim.

"Untie me. Please." Attempting to catch his breath, he reached between them to undo the knot he tied around her wrists.

Once they were free she reached behind her to grab the back of his head, threading her fingers

through his sweat-soaked mane and pulled his lips down to hers. Solas pulled away as he tried to contain his breathing, “But in all honesty, how are you not pregnant?”

Withdrawing her hands from him, she placed them on the floor in front of her and gently lifted her backside, letting his still hardened cock slip from inside her, his seed flowing from her cunt onto the floor between his legs. “You fell in love with a healer, Vhenan. I know my way around an herb or two.”

Chapter 6

The sounds of birds singing outside her window stirred her awake, if only for a moment. Having the familiar weight of an arm draped over her waist had her believe for a moment she was back in Arlathan, waking in their sanctuary among warm blankets and soft pillows. It wasn't until she started hearing her father calling her brothers outside her window that she remembered exactly where she was.

What was most interesting to her was that in her tiny bed, arm draped over her in a lazy embrace, was Solas, quietly snoring in front of her.

She remembered last night in the cellar, as well as him carrying her back home and kissing her goodnight outside her room, but finding him in her bed was not how she imagined her morning would start.

"What are you doing?" she closed her eyes, unsure what her reaction should be at that moment. "Sleeping." He said, scrunching his nose in slight agitation at being awoken.

"What are you doing in my bed?" she thought she should clarify, despite knowing he knew what she meant.

"Sleeping." His face relaxed as he stretched his arms before pulling her a little closer, groaning in satisfaction.

"You plan on just walking out of my bedroom in your night clothes, then?" His warmth was lulling her, making it difficult to want to start the day.

"I plan on sleeping. Also, there are children behind you." Pulling away from him she turned over to see the twins, sitting on the rug next to her bed. "How long have you two been waiting there?" the grogginess in her voice was hard to mask. "A while. Mom said to come get you and Reed wanted us to give you something." Her brow furrowed at the thought of Reed and surprises.

Sitting up, letting Solas' arm fall into her lap she stared down the young boys as a passive threat. "Whatever it is I want you to take it back."

Ignoring her command, the child in the green tunic on the right lifted a small pouch up to her face. It was nothing but a leather coin purse with tired, worn draw strings, but there was clearly something inside. "I said take it back."

"We can't! Reed said we had to give it to you or else we can't go with him to town!" The boy in the white shirt pleaded.

"He said he was sorry." The green lad quietly said as he lay the small satchel on the bed next to her.

She admitted to being a little curious, but still wouldn't trust Reed to simply apologize, not without being pressured to do so by their parents. She picked it up and noticed it had a little weight, but not so much more than the weight of the leather alone. She looked over to the boys, watching for any change in their expression that would hint as to what could be inside. Their faces remained placid as they waited patiently for her to open the pouch, anxious to see what's hidden away.

Untying the loose knot, and pulling the purse opening apart she turned it upside down attempting to catch whatever it was in her hand. It took a shake or two, but eventually the mystery was solved

as a large, fuzzy brown spider fell from the bag and landing in the center of her palm.

The instant she identified the creature in her hand she threw it in the air, screaming with pure terror. The two young boys followed the creature once it hit the ground and scuttled underneath the bed, absolutely entranced. Dahlia began rubbing her hands together in an effort to forget the feeling the spider left behind. Shuddering in a mix of disgust and anger, she turned over to see Solas burying his face in her pillow, the tips of his ears and cheeks were red as he attempt to muffle his silent laughter.

She could feel the boys underneath her bed, hyper and excited with their new playmate, “Get that thing out of here before I burn this house down!” Her voice hit octaves she never before reached in her life. Hearing loud laughter outside her window she hopped up from her bed and threw open the curtains, opened the pane, finding Reed outside with Aster laughing at her from below. She growled in concentrated rage, magic sputtering from her hands as she held onto the window’s ledge.

The urge to hurt her brother had overtaken her sense of maturity, “Mom!” she shouted as loud as she could, hoping her voice could travel throughout the house.

Dahlia saw her mother appear from the corner of her eyes, coming from around the side of the house. Poking her head outside the window she called after her mother, “Reed pranked me with a spider!” her voice gradually getting higher as she talked. Reed looked over to their mother with shock displayed across his face; they had reverted back to children it seems. Pointing up to her window, Reed made an eager attempt to defend himself, “She iced the floor in the study! And she hit me last night!”

Vi’dal wiped the dirt from her hands onto the smock of her apron, refusing to make eye contact with her children as she cleaned her hands. “Dahlia, your father slipped in the study this morning.” A faint call from between the rows, “I’m alright, my dear!” Vi’dal ignored her husband as she continued brushing the dirt from her apron, “And why would you hit your brother?” Dahlia was taken aback, “He’s lying to the twins about me! I just slapped him on the chest!” They continued on, back and forth with their explanations until a groggy Solas, hair mussed from sleep, popped his head from behind Dahlia. “Good morning Lady Lavellan!” he waved as he gently pushed Dahlia to the side so he could get a better look down below.

“Good Morning Solas. You’re up there too I see.” Vi’dal gave a warm smile as she used her hand to block the sun from her eyes. Catching a glimpse of his disheveled hair she gave him a small laugh, “You two didn’t sleep in that tiny bed, did you?”

Solas just let out a small laugh before retracting his head from view. Vi’dal turned around, eager to be done with this conversation and return to her gardening, “Please do something about the ice, dear. And don’t antagonize your sister, Reed.” As soon as she was out of sight, Reed and Dahlia gave each other a menacing look which spoke of revenge as she closed the window and prepared for the day.

“I’m gonna’ tell them. I’m gonna’ tell them and there’s nothing you can do to stop me.” Standing side-by-side with Dahlia as they cleaned the dishes together, Reed continued to whisper his taunt, hoping she would take the bait.

“You’re not going to tell anyone. You don’t have the gall.” She whispered back.

“What if I tell him about those other men? Like the blonde from when you were nineteen. Or how about the tall one from four summers ago.” He continued to pile on the threats as they continued

with their punishment.

“You want to play this game? I’ll tell them about what you and Rythe get up to in their bedroom when they go into town.” Her scrubbing was starting to become more animated as they continued.

“They already caught us; you have nothing.” Taking the clean dishes from her hands and wiping them dry before setting them to the side.

“Tell them then. Tell them about Solas. I will freeze your dick off.” Reed had to take a moment to ponder this threat. “Mom’ll get mad.”

“Oh no, you mean I’ll have wash these dishes all by myself; as you try and pick up all the pieces of your shattered dick off the rug!” Feeling the presence of their mother passing by the kitchen door, both immediately went silent, continuing their forced chore quietly until they were confident she was out of earshot.

“Rythe will avenge me.”

“I’ll freeze his dick off too.”

After finishing their lunch, Solas volunteered to help Llowar in the stables as they hitched the horses to a cart with several large barrels of wine. “These will be going to the next town over. Reed should be back before the sun sets; that should keep them out of each other’s hair for a few hours.”

Solas smirked, reliving the morning’s antics in his head. “Is this how they always act when they are together?”

“Lad, If we changed the curtains they would start a war over whether or not they are better than the last. And Dahlia would rather set all the curtains on fire than give him a chance to be right. They could fight worse than this in their sleep. You must have the patience of a God to put up with her temper.”

Solas turned his head to hide his grin, “I suppose so, but I will say that my temper is probably no better.”

Pulling at the ropes to tighten their hold of the barrels, Llowar jumped off the cart and secured the back. “Well, the world is still standing, I suppose.” Both men walked up to the front of the cart before climbing into the front seats, leading the horses from the stable. They sat in silence as they led the cart to the front of the house, waiting for Reed and the twins to show before climbing down.

Solas was the first to break the silence as they waited patiently, “To be honest, I would never guess the Lavellan family to be so diverse in personality.”

Llowar sat back in his seat, setting the reigns down as he fished out a flask from his vest pocket. “Her temper doesn’t come from nowhere, lad.” He took a small sip before passing to Solas, insisting he join him, “Her mother is the most patient and loveliest woman I have ever met in my life...” His eyes softened as he became more nostalgic. Solas took a small sip of the foul liquor before handing it back to him, letting his throat burn in silence as he finished his talk.

“...but when I met her I was a monstrous Commander; she would probably give you a different perspective, but I had a temper that could easily trounce my daughter’s.” As Llowar took another sip from his flask, Solas began to feel a slight uneasiness as he continued.

“I won’t threaten you, lad. I’m not that kind of man anymore, and I genuinely like you. I just

wanted to give you something to think about..." Almost on cue, the boys began filing from the house to the cart, twins running underneath the horse's belly to get to the other side. After a light hearted scolding from their father, the young men listened to their directions and began spurring the horses out the gate.

Llowar walked to the front door and called for Solas to come inside and rest for a moment. Parting ways in the family room, Llowar went upstairs leaving Solas alone.

Looking around as he waited below, he spotted long white hairs fluttering outside the window. Opening the door to the back, he found Dahlia, back facing him as she looked out over the garden from the terrace. Walking up quietly behind her, he wrapped his arms around her waist and buried his face into the back of her neck, nuzzling her warmly.

"Your father can certainly place fear in a man." pulling her closer to his chest.

"Yes, I imagine seeing the image of my dead father would put the fear in any man." Solas' pulled away from her as fast as he was able without pushing her into the rail. Vi'dal turned around to see Solas stumbling back, landing on his backside as she laughed in shared embarrassment. Solas tried to stand up, but the mortification of his actions had him stumbling before regaining his foothold.

"Lady Lavellan! I'm very sorry! I thought..." His face was red from humiliation as Vi'dal continued to laugh at his misfortune, "You thought I was Dahlia?" she tried to stifle her laughter behind her hand. "I guess I can see that."

Solas had to turn away from her, unable to properly articulate himself in this situation. "I can definitely see why she adores you though. Such an affectionate man..." Putting his face in his hands, he took in a deep breath before bursting with laughter.

Once their awkwardness subsided, he put his hands on his hips and looked down at the floor, letting reality sink back in.

"I don't suppose you could keep this embarrassing story from your husband? At least until we leave?"

Crossing her arms over her chest she shot him a sly look, "And save you the embarrassment? This will be a good story to tell over tea tonight."

Chapter 7

Chapter Summary

This one is fluffy like a kitten!

He swore he could feel himself burning.

Sipping his tea in pitiful silence he kept his eyes forward, focusing hard on the patterns along the wall as the day slipped slowly into dusk. Quietly drinking his tea, he barely registered the bitter taste on his tongue as he tried to ignore the uncomfortable silence in the room.

Her eyes never left him; she wasn't even sure she had blinked in the past several minutes, but her gaze continued to burrow into his skull. Vi'dal just sat back, smiling to herself as she watched her husband drink his tea as he envisioned the embarrassing story from earlier; face placid in contemplation.

Vi'dal simply thought the act was endearing and cute as her husband remained cool to the thought of another man accidentally groping his wife. Dahlia's eyebrow began to twitch.

"So..." Vi'dal began, attempting to break the uncomfortable silence that permeated the room.

"I'm not letting you out of my sight again." Dahlia whispered as she finally took a sip of her tea, cold and stale from the inattention. Solas said nothing, sitting in silent embarrassment as he waited for this uncomfortable moment to finally pass.

"You two are about to make his head burst. This awkward conversation is punishment enough Dahlia, go check on the boys and see to the pots in the kitchen." Vi'dal flicked her wrist playfully at Dahlia, shooing her from the room.

As Dahlia stood up she locked eyes with the infamous Fen'Harel; puppy-dog eyes pleading for mercy to not be left alone with the real wolves. Dahlia shot him a look which spoke, 'I've seen you take down a castle of bandits. Are you really afraid?' The look he returned simply said, 'Yes.'

Turning her attention to the muffled giggling in the other room, she left him to his misery.

Solas wasn't sure if he should make light of this situation and joke or sit quietly, hoping someone would change the subject for him. The hollow sounds of heavy boots echoed throughout the room, gradually becoming clearer as the owner stepped out of the hall.

Reed, followed quietly by Aster greeted their parents and Solas before taking a seat on the large settee across from their mother's chair. Llowar perked up at the sight of his boys and soon the conversation turned to their trip into town, much to Solas' relief.

Listening patiently to their conversation, Solas' mind began to wander as he noticed the many similarities between the men. Aster with his short, bristly hair had the sharp features of his father's face. Their jaws were defined and strong, while their cheeks were thin and angular. Aster wasn't as tall or as muscular as his father, but his lithe frame seemed to suit him well. Reed on the other hand had more in common with his father's build, but his face was his own; a mix from both parents, but his eyes reminded him of Dahlia.

A yell from the dining room, followed by a loud crash startled the room. A moment later the two young boys came galloping through the house, tears streaming down their cheeks as they practically launched themselves into their mother's arms.

Burrowing their faces into her dress they cried true tears of despair. The boys were almost inconsolable as they tried to make words through the gasps they muffled in their mother's dress.

Realizing at that moment the source of the scream, Solas nearly jumped from his seat until he heard Dahlia call out from the other room.

"Everything's fine! Don't come in here!"

The boys just seemed to get more upset at the sound of her voice. "She killed him, mama!" the voice was almost too muffled to understand as the child buried his head deep into his mother's dress. "She killed our spider!"

Llowar with a loud sigh of relief, sunk into the back of his chair, "Thank Mythal." He smiled genuinely as his wife coaxed the boys from their grief, smiling back at him and shaking her head when the boys weren't looking.

Solas noticed the absence of the table cloth at dinner, but perhaps the most noticeable difference was the somber faces of the two little boys, watching their plates with the most pitiful expression he ever beheld on such young lads.

Once dinner had finished and the plates were cleaned and put away, each member had excused themselves for the evening to prepare for bed.

The young boys, feeling a bit better after each being treated to a small cake after dinner, ran to the bathing room with Reed in tow. Sounds of splashing and laughter from the two small children, followed by the exasperating pleas from their brother echoed through the halls to their bedroom.

Solas moved his pack into Dahlia's room, seeing no reason for modesty at this point, and began his nightly ritual while Dahlia changed.

Hands planted on the floor below him, he pushed his body up and let his hips slowly sink to the floor while keeping his arms fully extended. As he stretched his neck and torso he felt the tension ease from his back and held the position for a few seconds before feeling soft hands gently kneed each finger into his shoulders.

"Still happy you came?" she withdrew her hands and sat on the bed, waiting for him to finish.

"You father said he liked me. I don't know if that still rings true after what I did to your mother." Sitting back on his heels, he stood up and followed her to the bed.

"The way you say that makes it sound like you've done something unspeakable. You gave her a hug, that's all." Standing up she walked to her door and locked it, not wanting a repeat of this morning. Solas unmade the bed and crawled underneath the blanket, waiting patiently for Dahlia to cuddle up to him on the tiny frame. "Well I did say her husband was a bit frightening."

"You're not the first to say that. Just the first to admit it to their face." Climbing in after him, she made herself comfortable as they divided up the space evenly on the small pillow.

"You're not angry then?" closing his eyes, he wrapped his arms around her, burying his face into her chest as he snuggled closer.

“You looked so pitiful when I left... I didn’t think I could make it to the dining room without laughing. You deserved every second of that...” Solas took a deep breath and blew against the skin between her breasts, interrupting her dialogue with a yelp as he held her firmly to him. Wrapping her arms around his head in an effort to stifle the tickling, she squeezed his head tightly to her chest, suffocating his attack.

“Stop it! Stop!” She heard a low, muffled laugh emit from her chest as she tried to keep her noise from disturbing the house. He pushed away from her to catch his breath before rolling over onto his back, grinning with amusement as Dahlia clutched the sheet to her chest; a small effort to prevent another assault.

“You delight in vexing me.” She rolled onto her side, keeping her back towards him.

“I think you take pleasure in being vexed, otherwise you wouldn’t be so easy to anger. You carry a sickness, my vhenan.” Rolling back onto his side, he cuddled her to his chest as he gently whispered in her ear. The next hour went by as they talked quietly about anything that came to mind until they fell asleep together on their tiny bed.

The final day here in her childhood home made Dahlia very nostalgic and wistful, despite the constant aggravation from her brothers, but she knew they were only doing it to make up for lost time. Solas never left her side as he took in the peace of a simpler life; one he felt he was denying himself and her. “Do you miss this?” he asked.

“My family? This old home? What do you mean?” Sitting in the cool shade of the pergola as she watched her mother prune away the dead flowers. The twins were digging in a patch of dirt away from everyone and every few minutes they would rush over to their mother with a dirty hand full of worms. Solas watched as Vi’dal would smile and point them to a flowerbed where they could deposit their tiny friends. “Either, or both I suppose.”

“Of course. You weren’t born a... evanuris.” Dahlia had to censor her words, “I imagine you would miss your childhood home from time to time.” Solas took a moment to remember an age when life was simple and cruel. He remembered the small village he lived in as a child. His mother with her long, braided red hair and freckled face would scold him terribly for being such a little terror. He smiled when he thought back to how she would kick him out of the house to go play with the other children when she was at her limits.

‘Solas! For the love all things good in this world...’ was how she would begin her lecture before turning him loose to the outside world. She only asked that he return with all his fingers and toes before the sun went down.

“My poor mother,” he chuckled, “I was such a little demon as a child.”

“Was, huh?” her sarcastic tone was thick as she looked him in the eye, eyebrow cocked in mockery. “Your mother must have had more patience than mine if she was able to keep up with you as a child. I can only imagine the sort of trouble you stirred up.”

He turned his gaze away and closed his eyes in false contemplation, “I remember her smacking the back of my head when she caught me staring at a young woman when I was an adolescent young man.” Dahlia rolled her eyes and shook her head at the obvious draw.

“And your father?” she asked, trying to gauge exactly where in his family line this behavior could have come from.

“I never knew who he was. Probably explains a lot, doesn’t it?” he laughed, but she couldn’t tell if it was genuine or if he was making light of the answer.

“I’m sorry I asked.” Was all she said as they continued to watch in silence as the young boys continued to dig for more worms.

As the silence between them was becoming almost uncomfortable, Aster appeared from behind the house, clutching his little note book as usual. Spotting Dahlia and Solas resting in the quiet shade away from his brothers, he began walking towards them. Softly climbing up the steps, he gave Solas a polite nod and sat down on a chair across from them; eager to begin writing inside his book.

“What are you up to?” Dahlia inquired, but Aster just continued to pencil away, unaware he was even being addressed. “Aster.” His head shot up from his book with a quiet, “yes?” clearly anxious to answer any questions so that he may get back to work. Repeating her question, Aster sat back in his chair and crossed one leg over the other as he knew that his answer was not going to be quick. Solas noted the confidence conveyed through his body language and gave the young man his full attention; clearly he was taking the time to explain something he felt was important.

“I’m trying to build an apiary. Perhaps one day we can begin making honey wine; mom’s flowers certainly bring them in, but I’m trying to figure out how big or how many we would need. I also need to know how much honey we could harvest from them to make a subtle difference in the taste. Then there’s the matter of how many barrels could we make...”

“Serious business.” Solas said, impressed with the amount of thought taken into consideration for something as simple as honeybees.

“Well, this is our livelihood we’re talking about.” Solas conceded his point, he shouldn’t be one to write off their vineyard as something as mundane as a hobby. Sometimes it was difficult to empathize with that hardship after so many years without needing to care about money and necessities.

“An entire family run business? Why become a healer? This seems much more glamorous, not to mention lucrative.” Solas poked at her. “Dahlia doesn’t know anything about making wine.” Aster answered for her.

“I can make poultices that can hit you harder than any wine you can ever make.” A pointless jab to protect her ego, but Aster continued. “I think that would be counterproductive to heal a person just to have them drunkenly injure themselves afterwards.” He stopped to think about what he had said. Clearly an idea had formed in his mind and pulled his attention away from his company.

“Do you think we can make a wine that could heal? Even just a little bit? Would it taste bad?” Solas looked him in the eyes and nodded discretely so as not to alert Dahlia as she spoke.

They talked about ideas and wine for hours until they were joined by Reed, then Llowar, until the entire family was sitting underneath the pergola, talking about anything that came to mind. It was a relatively peaceful day, and Dahlia agreed that this was a good day to end their trip with. The memory of everyone laughing and telling stories until the sky turned orange was almost heartbreaking when she knew they were going to be leaving them in the morning.

Chapter 8

After tea and dinner were finished Vi'dal excused herself for the evening, herding her small boys to their rooms before laying them down to bed. Llowar stayed up for a while longer, smoking his pipe as he listened to the conversation between his children; smiling to himself when the conversation would get heated.

"I'll miss this when she's gone." Llowar directed his attention to Solas while his offspring talked among themselves.

"I can't say I would know, but it seems like they bring out the storm in one another. You would miss that?" Solas inched away from the others on his seat to better talk with Llowar. "Yes. You should see how happy it makes their mother when they fight." He chuckled. "She would put on her stern face when they were looking, but when they leave she would tell me, 'Our children are too smart and stubborn, my dear. None of them can handle being wrong and I don't know where they get it from.' But she loves to hear them argue about nonsense." Snuffing his pipe, Llowar stood up and made his way to a small ornate cabinet. Pulling a small key from his pocket he unlocked the door, reached in and pulled out a crystal decanter filled with a dark liquid so dense that no light would shine through the glass.

Placing the bottle on the low table before his children, he pulled four glasses for each of them. After saying goodnight to his sons he kissed Dahlia's forehead, "I will see you in the morning, my girl." Placing a strong, reassuring hand on Solas' shoulder and bidding him goodnight, he left them to their drink as he made his way upstairs.

"I hope dad realizes that his vintage will be gone when he wakes up tomorrow." Aster chuckled to himself.

Reed pulled the plug from the bottle and was instantly greeted by the foul aroma of burnt anise, which began to permeate the room. "There is absolutely no way, even with the four of us, could we drink this whole bottle. Dad's a sadistic bastard. He's been nursing this drink for years." Pouring just enough for one mouthful into each glass, everyone took a moment to build up the courage before quickly swallowing the swill.

Instant regret attacked each one as they tried to contain their coughing. Once they were able to breathe normally and their eyes stopped weeping, they placed the cups on a tray and resealed the bottle; agreeing to never open it again.

There was an air of solidarity lingering among them once their mouths stopped salivating. Solas sat back and let the burning in his throat carry its heat into his head. "What, in all this world, was that we drank?"

Reed was the first to respond, although his voice cracked with use, "I think it came from Orzammar. It tastes like fermented mushrooms and roots. I don't know if our father actually enjoys this swill or if it was a gift he's been trying to get rid of." Aster, leaning forward on his knees, began to laugh until the very act sent him into fits of coughing.

Dahlia, feeling the sour drink instantly turn her stomach, stood up abruptly to the surprise of her brothers.

"Move!" she commanded. Aster and Reed picked their feet off the floor and tucked their knees to their chest as they made a clear path. Dahlia wasted no time before rushing out the back door onto

the enclosure before puking over the rail into her mother's rose bushes.

Sinking to the floor she remained draped over the railing, waiting for the next wave to hit her. Feeling the hands of someone pulling her hair back, she looked up to see Reed, trying to retain his drunken laughter.

"Mom's gonna wanna know who tossed their dinner in the bushes." His speech was beginning to slur. Dahlia laughed at him, although the motion made her stomach clench once more. "Give it a moment." She said.

Reed just smiled until he caught the smell of anise and bile, a potent combination that made his stomach clamp instantly until he was right beside her, vomiting into the flowerbed below.

After a few moments the wash of relief overcame them as they sat on the floor, making sure their stomachs had nothing more to give. Reed couldn't help but laugh afterwards, "Dahlia, you suck." Dahlia laughed, but offered no witty retort; conceding his point until Aster and Solas joined them outside.

"Oh! We like to drink with Aster! Cause Aster is our mate!" Solas, Reed, and Dahlia sang joyfully outside on the steps, almost unable to keep the cadence of the song through their laughter, "And when we drink with Aster, he downs his drink in eight! Seven! Six!" As they continued to count down Aster drank his mead as fast as he could, finishing before 'one' was called. Applause and congrats were heaved at the junior in the group as they each refilled their cups. "Solas." Aster named him and already the chant begun again.

"Oh! We like to drink with Solas! Cause Solas is our mate!" Solas tried to prepare himself. After already succeeding the last three rounds his stomach was feeling full as he began sweating liberally through his shirt, "And when we drink with Solas, he downs his drink in eight! Seven! Six! Five!" Solas tried but only managed to get halfway through his drink before the final number was called. Solas set down his drink between his feet, smiling as he placed his head in his hands, accepting his defeat.

"Why was he born so beautiful! Why was he born at all?" Aster and Reed continued on the second verse as Dahlia sipped her drink, leaning against the handrail for stability. "He's no fucking use to anyone! He's no fucking use at all! He's a cu-" At that point Dahlia stomped Reed in the back, ending the song instantly as Aster spit his mead on the ground as he laughed.

"Don't call him that!" Dahlia's words were lazy and forced. Reed stood up and spun on his heels, catching his balance as he looked her in the eye, "You can't tell me what to do! You're not my mother!"

Dahlia took the shawl off her shoulders and threw the feather-light fabric to the floor, comically hitting the ground without a sound. "I'mma mess you up, Reed!" Her arms stretched out in an attempt to keep her balance than to look threatening.

Aster tried to stand up and move away from them, but the best he could do was scoot over to the side. Solas, just continued to sip his drink, almost unaware of the drunk fight brewing in front of him.

"What are you gonna do, huh? I got two feet on y..." Dahlia jumped off her step and tackled him to the ground before he could finish his boast. Landing on the dirt path before the steps, the breath knocked from Reed's lungs, both barely had the strength or will to fight in earnest. Dahlia gave a few weak hits to his chest as a drunken way of declaring herself the winner before she felt herself

being pulled up from their prone position in the dirt. Reed attempted to push himself up, but the allure of rest suddenly overcame him.

“I toll’ you! I said it!” Dahlia tried to prove her case to an invisible audience, Solas just held her back with little strength. “I mess you up so bad!” Aster was red in the face as he tried to catch his breath.

A voice could be heard coming from a window upstairs, “What in the world are you all doing down there?” Vi’dal poked her head out, but couldn’t see over the awning below. “Nothin’ mama.” Her children spoke in quiet unison.

“Dahlia kicked me.” Reed quietly confessed.

“Shuddup.” Trying to stay as quiet as possible, Dahlia threatened her brother who remained flattened on the ground.

“She also...”

“Why you always tellin’!” Dahlia yelled before the hollow thud of a metal cup was heard hitting something soft before tumbling to the ground.

Vi’dal withdrew her head from the window when she heard the sounds of her husband sitting up in their bed. “Come back to bed, vhenan. I’ll go out and have a word with them.” Content with letting their father handle their behavior, Vi’dal pulled back the blankets and watched her husband quickly dress before leaving to handle their rowdy children.

As she began getting cozy in the large empty bed, she suddenly heard a ruckus through her window.

“Oh! We like to drink with Father! Cause father is our mate!”

Vi’dal let out an exasperated sigh. Using her magic to shut her window, she grabbed her husband’s pillow and placed it over her head. Clearly he wasn’t going to need it any time soon.

“No talking. Not yet.” Dahlia swore she could hear the blood pumping through every vein in her body. Breakfast was very quiet as each sibling simply glared at each other with dark circles under their eyes. The bright sunlight in the room made Solas nauseous, but the young boys were perhaps the greatest offenders to their hangover. Clinking tableware, laughter, and simply the thought of their innocence made everyone at the table sick. Llowar, didn’t seem any worse for wear, but Vi’dal appeared tired and sad that this was their last meal together as a whole family.

The boys squealed with joy over something exchanged between them; a collective groan was shared across the table as the shrill sound penetrated their skulls.

“Just kill me.” Aster whispered. “It hurts to think.”

Dahlia put her head in her hands, and let out a deep sigh. “I’ll kill you if you kill me.”

“I’ll kill the both of you if means you’ll shut up.” Reed was not in the mood to be civil.

“No one’s going to kill anyone. Just eat your breakfast.” Vi’dal quietly spooned her meal, a little grumpy herself. They ate slowly and silently, drinking their water with an almost unquenchable thirst before returning to their rooms to prepare for their day ahead.

With the horses packed and ready, Dahlia and Solas stood at the front gate to say goodbye to her family before returning to Arlathan.

“My girl, you must come back soon.” Llowar hugged his daughter with such an incredible strength; she regretted eating so much before leaving. Vi’dal put a gentle hand on Solas’ arm, giving him an innocent smile, “Perhaps next time you visit, I should put my hair up. Don’t want any more confusion, do we?” The swift memory of his embarrassing moment brought the color back into his face.

Reed and Dahlia stood in front of each other, waiting for the other to make the first move. After a moment of silence, Reed started, “Next time I’m in Arlathan I’ll...”

“...prepare for another ass beating? I agree.” The hug they gave one another was very touching for their parents to witness, until it became apparent that both were trying to crush the other in their embrace. “That’s enough out of you two.” Llowar pulled Reed away as Solas hooked his arm around Dahlia’s waist; acting as an anchor.

Saying their final goodbyes, they mounted their horses and began walking them out the gate. Looking back as they continued to ride down the road, Dahlia could see her family remain at the front of the house, watching them until they were completely out of sight.

Her heart felt heavy as the sensation of homesickness began to press on her like guilt. Trying to think of all the good things awaiting her back home in Arlathan would lift her spirits, but thinking back to her father’s last hug made her eyes tear up.

“Do you need a handkerchief?” Solas inquired.

“No! I’m not crying! I’m just really hung-over and the sun hurts!” her defense was obviously a ruse, but Solas relented.

“We will see them again soon, I promise. Whenever you want.” They continued to ride in the hot summer sun, taking their time until they reached the incredible gates of Arlathan before the dusk claimed the sky above.

Soon they would resume their roles, but their brief escape would be the topic of discussion for several days.

Epilogue

My Girl,

I wanted to make sure you managed to return home all right. The twins are already asking when you and Solas will come back and see us again. I don't exactly know when that could be. I think it would just be easier to come see you. We are preparing our winter wine for some noble's affair later on this year. Perhaps we should take the time to stop by your home and see you, even if it's just for a day.

Send my regards to your Solas.

I love you,

Dad

Dad,

If you are set on coming here in the winter then I suppose you need to know so you don't go crazy in front of everyone. Solas is Fen'Harel. Please try not to make a lot of noise about it.

Love,

Dahlia

Dahlia,

Your jokes are awful! Your father spent the evening pacing the floor after reading your letter! Why would you make up such a thing! When we see you this Winterseve you are going to be in a lot of trouble, my girl.

Mom

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